

**RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING  
MINUTES  
Tuesday 22 August 2023 6-7pm on Teams**

**Present: Members**

Kirsty East (KE)  
Natalieann Leadbetter (NL)  
Paul Evans (PE)  
Steve Hill (StH)  
Valerie George (VG)  
Teresa Godden-O'Callaghan (TGO'C)  
Adam Field (AF)  
Abdul Kader (AK)  
Sue Masters (SM)

**In attendance**

Sarah Holden (SH), Resident Scrutiny Manager  
Amanda Mankelow, (AM) Resident Scrutiny Administrative Assistant (Minutes)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; apologies for absence</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1.1	SH opened the meeting as Katherine Parker (KP), Independent Chair had sent apologies.	
1.2	Apologies had also been received from Alex Tuckwell (AT)	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of interest</b>	
2.1	None.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 25 July) &amp; matters arising</b>	
3.1	It was noted that the panel had not wanted to put forward any further questions for Lara Sotak, Homeownership Officer following her presentation at the last meeting.	
3.2	The dates for the estate days had been put on the WhatsApp group, one of which was the next day which TGO'C and possibly others would be attending. This would be touched upon later.	
3.3	All panel members had sent their research findings to AM and these had been collated. SH advised this would be shared with the panel later in the week.	SH/AM
3.4	TGO'C had taken photographs of the Echelon leaflet which had then been uploaded to the SharePoint site for all to see and had a hard copy also. SH asked if she could bring a paper copy with her to the estate day the next day, TGO'C advised that she would be bringing a copy which she had picked up for TCH to keep.	TGO'C
3.5	TGO'C had also sent copies of her case studies to AM, details of which would be included with the rest of the information shared with the panel.	
3.6	Permission had been given by panel members for photographs and quotes to be used in the annual report.	

- 3.7 The information available to date about the estate days had been shared with the panel after the last meeting.
- 3.8 SH advised that discussions around the next review topic did not need to take place at this meeting. She stated that her and AM were working with colleagues in the performance team to share the latest Key Performance Indicator (KPI) document which would be made available to the panel as soon as it was ready. She continued this would be discussed at the next meeting and used to inform the topic of the next review.
- 3.9 The panel agreed the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting held in July.

**4. Review of information and activities to date & next steps**

- 4.1 SH asked if the panel had been able to review all the information on SharePoint, acknowledging there had been a lot.
- 4.2 TGO'C advised that she was still trying to decipher the Microsoft sign-in issue but felt that she had been able to read enough of the information shared by email to form an opinion.
- 4.3 KE stated that she had had some problems with the complaints not downloading. SH stated that this would be addressed.
- 4.4 VG advised that she had experienced problems with SharePoint but she was able to download the documents from the email using her apple mac.
- 4.5 At this point VG shared a recent personal success she had had in securing a new job. SH and members of the panel congratulated her.
- 4.6 PE stated that having read the information, he had noted there were instances of contractors taking too long to deal with reported problems.
- 4.7 SH asked if anyone else had views to share, perhaps on something that had jumped out at them from the information.
- 4.8 PE suggested there should be a named person as the point of contact in cases.
- 4.9 VG advised that in her work role, she uses a follow-up spreadsheet which can be accessed by any member of staff dealing with an individual, allowing them to see progress. She also advised that communication needs to be kept up.
- 4.10 NL joined the meeting at this point.
- 4.11 SH advised of the estate day taking place the next day in Rusthall, stating that this was aimed at targeting areas known to have damp and mould issues and advised that some on-the-spot interventions might be carried out which the panel could see. SH suggested that it could be a good opportunity to ask the TCH Repairs operations manager how TCH keeps tabs on cases and ensures follow up. She noted that there was a lot of government attention on damp and mould and a lot of pressure on housing associations to be getting on top it.
- 4.12 TGO'C felt that there should be a database where progress can be ticked off when the resident is satisfied, as sometimes too many people can be involved in cases. She agreed she would like to ask this the next day.

AM

TGO'C

- 4.13 TGO'C conceded that it wouldn't be known this time of year if a resolution had truly worked, this would only become apparent in November for instance, in the winter.
- 4.14 StH felt that in the damp and mould complaints that were shared, around 60% of the lessons learnt were around failures to communicate, missed deadlines and a few about simply taking ownership.
- 4.15 KE felt that it would be interesting to learn why there is such a lack of communication, whether it was difficult to communicate with tenants or if it was due to a lack of time. She felt it would be good to understand the communication procedure and stated that she felt the leaflet from Cadwyn which AK had found, detailing moisture generation in pints, was excellent. She suggested TCH should adopt and share this on their website.
- 4.16 VG felt that in the cases shared there can be a big discrepancy in the levels of compensation given for damp and mould cases, and suggested residents needed to be aware of what they might be entitled to as it could create unfairness. SH explained that as part of her role, she deals with stage two complaints which often involve giving compensation. She went on to say that it can be subjective, difficult to know what amount of compensation would be appropriate to give and that it is down to each complaint handler to suggest this.
- 4.17 AK noted a reference in the complaints to a migration in systems causing follow ups to not take place (when TCH Repairs took over from Countrywise Repairs Ltd). He agreed about a more transparent system of compensation but suggested this may be a recipe for residents to suddenly ask for large compensation payments. He went on to say that residents might wish to know who was dealing with their case as that would indicate what amount of compensation they might get.
- 4.18 SH suggested that perhaps a small panel of the same people could decide on the amount payable in each case.
- 4.19 TGO'C felt there could be a table of compensation with ranges for different things and that this would assist both residents and staff, as if it's not clear for staff, then it's not clear for anyone.
- 4.20 SH advised that following or during a stage two complaint, a resident is able to go to the housing ombudsman who could instruct TCH to pay a higher amount of compensation. TGO'C asked if the ombudsman has a scale of compensation and felt that TCH should be mirroring that.
- 4.21 SH acknowledged that greater transparency could be achieved, noting that the compensation policy could be published on TCH website.
- 4.22 TGO'C stated that the policy would always be open to interpretation, and that it wasn't really about the compensation but rather about getting issues sorted as genuine people are often not looking for money.

## **5. Interim recommendations**

- 5.1 SH asked the panel to think about what they might like to suggest for recommendations, noting that there was still a section of the review left to complete and lots of time to firm up the recommendations, possibly at the October meeting.
- 5.2 TGO'C felt that there should be a checklist for things such as functioning heating systems and windows for properties when they become void. She felt

that TCH should be properly checking and also spending more than ten minutes with new residents when they move in.

- 5.3 VG suggested greater understanding for those residents with mental health difficulties and this might be affected by damp and mould. She also mentioned cultural differences citing drying clothes indoors. She suggested producing a colour booklet/manual to explain how drying clothes indoors for instance causes damp and mould. KE countered that some people don't have a choice but to dry their clothes indoors, particularly if they live in a flat.
- 5.4 AK felt that damp and mould could be an option to select on the phones, splitting up types of issues for the repairs team and allowing them to give priority to it, as well as things like heating and hot water problems.
- 5.5 NL suggested video and audio information for residents on prevention, as well as in leaflet form.
- 5.6 SH read out some of the suggestions that the panel had made at the last meeting which had been collated and asked for further comment on them.
- 5.7 NL advised that she had had a handbook when she moved in and suggested adding something in there about damp and mould. SH added that shared owners receive a Home User Guide (HUG) where it could be included too. SH said she was unsure how much information is in the document currently on damp and mould but would check. AM/SH
- 5.8 KE asked if there had been a shift in attitude and blaming residents, stigma as it's a joint responsibility. SH felt that it might be good to ask at the estate day how TCH demonstrates this change to a joint approach. TGO'C
- 5.9 TGO'C referenced a phrase she had heard from the ombudsman at the Tpas conference about "stopping the blame game". She remembered TCH's initial reaction used to be to issue a leaflet and tell residents to sort the problem themselves. She suggested that some people would not be aware that their actions were causing damp and mould, and felt that residents need to be told from the very first call when they report the problem that TCH would work with them to resolve it.
- 5.10 SH stated that the recommendations would be revisited next month and probably the month after as well.
- 5.11 VG added that there needs to be accountability, stating that the government has put together initiatives, but landlords have a responsibility to do certain things too.
- 5.12 SH felt there were several positive recommendations and for the panel to consider what they would wish to do in the reality check phase of the review. She asked whether the panel would want to speak to residents who had recently received a damp and mould intervention by holding a digital focus group, to find out if the issue had been resolved or what could have been done better. She suggested that the panel might prefer speaking directly to residents rather than AM and SH getting responses and feeding them back, as the panel could then ask questions.
- 5.13 TGO'C felt that it would be good to go door knocking, to hear and see first-hand the extent of the problems experienced. SH conceded that many people will not open their doors and that it would have to be residents known to have problems rather than a random door knock.

- 5.14 VG liked the idea of a face to face forum, and suggested offering tea and coffee as an incentive to joining. SH stated that she was thinking of an online focus group due to geography and suggested that residents could be offered a shopping voucher to attend. VG felt this was even better.
- 5.15 NL suggested in the first instance sending a questionnaire/survey to those who had had damp and mould issues resolved, perhaps then offering a face-to-face visit to discuss their experience if appropriate.
- 5.16 KE felt that it might be useful to do a mystery shopping exercise to see how easy it is to report and find out what response is given and in what timeframe. SH asked if KE would be able to do this for the call centre, web chat and also as a shared owner, with the leasehold management team. KE agreed, stating that in the past she had been told that she needed to deal with an issue herself but was still given advice on how and where to seek help to resolve it.
- 5.17 VG agreed that as a shared owner, problems should be shared, instead of residents left on their own, stating that she had been left to deal with an issue herself.
- 5.18 All agreed with the exercises suggested.
- 5.19 SH advised that her and AM would pull all the panel's comments together, think about the survey and run everything past the panel before it goes out.
- 6. AOB**
- 6.1 SH asked VG and NL if they would be attending the estate day the next day. They both said they might attend the Paddock Wood one in September instead. SH asked if anyone else would wish to go to the September one. It was felt that AT had expressed interest at the last meeting also.
- 7. Date of next meeting on Teams (Tuesday 26 September 2023 6–7.30pm)**
- 7.1 The panel were already aware of the date of the September meeting as the August one had been an addition.
- 8. Reappointment of panel members (Natalieann Leadbetter and Adam Field to leave the meeting at this point)**
- 8.1 SH asked NL and AF to leave the meeting, which they did.
- 8.2 SH explained that NL was coming to the end of her second term on the panel and that AF had come to the end of his first term on the panel.
- 8.3 SH asked if the panel agreed to NL and AF in turn, to re-stand as members. Everyone agreed for both to remain.
- 8.4 SH thanked everyone for being in attendance as it had been an extra meeting.
- 8.5 By the end of the meeting Kevin Dodds (KD) had not managed to join.

AM/SH